

Brexit and Tony Blair's Education Policies 1997- 2007: Britain's integration to Europe

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Abstract: The United Kingdom (UK) decision to leave the European Union, known as Brexit has caused some deep structural tensions and demands within UK and European societies because it did not grow organically and naturally. Brexit challenged the resilience of the education system and its relevance on complex matters such as racism and social cohesion in societies. Social cohesion formed part of Tony Blair's education policies viewed as a social project with broader national agenda. This paper examines how Brexit undermined Tony Blair's ten years education policies which embraced the European principles of socio- inclusion. The study used qualitative approach and data was collected from policies crafted from 1997-2007. These policies helped to ascertain how Brexit undermined Blair's social national agenda- Britain's integration to Europe. These policies communicated government's characterised Blair's ten years term in office. The interpretative content analysis was used to analyse the policies. The findings revealed that Brexit undermined Blair's government effort of improving the teaching profession or pedagogical discourses which were perceived as key facilitators of Britain's integration to Europe. The study revealed that Brexit discussions were dominated by immigrants related issues, yet Blair's policies put more emphasis on inclusionary practices within Britain and Europe. Brexit left the Conservative Party and others heavily divided and this did not reflect the well supported and internationally recognised education system. Blair's policies were also undermined by officials' approach to policy implementation, which was characterised by relatively lack of sustained efforts and improvement for the most disadvantaged pupils and quasi-market forces in education. The study concluded that there was invisible and visible evidence that Brexit referendum of 2016 undermined Blair's education policies.

Key words: Brexit, Education policy, Labour government

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I. INTRODUCTION

Tony Blair has always seen Britain's integration to Europe as precondition of becoming a truly modern country (Gray, 2004, P 40).

During the 1997 election campaign Tony Blair, the then British Prime minister repeatedly stated that one of the top three priorities of the New Labour government would be "education, education, education" (Furlong, 2007), as a springboard for the country's economic development and its political influence within Europe and beyond. This message was communicated through different governments' policies.

This paper examines how the Brexit undermined Tony Blair's ten years education policies which aimed at providing quality education characterised by key competencies such as critical thinking and critical thinking disposition. This was achieved by examining Brexit and Blair's education policies not in isolation from each other, as an appropriate lens, with possibilities of convincing conclusions. Emphasising the interconnection between Brexit and education policies help in understanding that how an activity such as Brexit is shaped and framed by broader layers of contexts and dynamisms between them. These policies were intentionally crafted to guide government's effort, particularly in achieving the country's broader national goals. Examining the education policies could provide an important context from which to describe how the Brexit undermined Tony Blair's effort to integrate Britain to Europe. As Gray, 2004, p. 40, states that Tony Blair has always seen Britain's integration to Europe as precondition of becoming a truly modern country.

The Labour Party's election manifesto (Labour Party, 1997) was considered as the core foundation of the education policies and others. Walford, (2005, p 3) noted that during the election campaign Tony Blair had repeatedly claimed that the top three priorities of the New Labour government would be education, education, education. The New Labour was convinced that world class public service depends on quality education (Walford, (2005).

The Labour government was convinced that Britain's integration and other dynamics of capitalism and other societal challenges had to be reconciled with social cohesion, individualism, economic efficiency and social justice (Grey, 2004). These need not to be at odds but complement and reinforce each other (Grey, 2004), and this could be achieved through an effective education system. The Labour government was clear that undertaking education and socio-economic transformation involved costs, direct costs and the opportunity costs because education has the capability to enhance future productivity and sustainability.

Under Prime Minister Blair, education was elevated from being a social policy matter to an economic policy issue because of its capabilities to promote critical thinking skills and its disposition necessary for economic development and sustainable development. Education was deemed to be important because of its connection to economic development, democratic traditions and sustainable development practices. At the heart of a strong economic development and participatory democracy is the citizens' capacity to question the actions, practices, justifications, assumptions and imagine alternatives to current structures. This relates to the Brexit (United Kingdom decision to leave the European Union) scenario which required the British citizens to apply their critical thinking skills and display their critical thinking skills dispositions or recognised and researched the assumptions that undergird their thoughts and actions regarding the Brexit 2016 referendum.

Brexit and education are linked or intertwined because any societal change such as Brexit reflects the nature of the education system and its products (Citizens' possession of relevant competencies: knowledge; skills). Brexit relates to education and it is an educational matter because it was a product of peoples' cognitive thinking capacity, an educational matter itself. Van Rensen, (2016) noted that there were multiple reasons for the Brexit voting patterns, but lack of knowledge of the academic consensus on the costs was one factor. Brexit was anchored on European Union related matters such political sovereignty and immigration related challenges. Both these issues form part of the British education curriculum, which needs to be understood by the British citizens fairly well in order to deal with the culture of Euro scepticism perpetuated by the media for decades (Wren-Lewis, 2016). The Curriculum is expected to unpack the benefits of the country's membership (UK being a member of the European Union). For example, Van Rensen, (2016 p. 377) claimed that being a member of the European Union helped the United Kingdom to reverse a century of relative economic decline. The gap in GDP per capita was reduced significantly with that in the United States, France, and Germany between the last referendum in 1975.

To an extent, Brexit mirrored or reflected the education system, challenged government education policies and the nature of the British society's capabilities to critical interrogate key societal matters: immigration, economy, trade, governance and political stability in relation to Brexit's implications. Brexit needs to be contextualised because it was contextually shaped and cannot be adequately understood without paying attention to country's education policies and other related factors. Education policies are also contextualised matters and need to be contextualised because they are also contextually shaped and cannot be adequately understood without attention to British education and social policy settings. Lauder, (2007) noted that under Blair's government education policies were contextualised and sensitive to broader national goals. Education was taken as an economic policy matter rather a social policy, because creation of highly skilled workforce, national prosperity, social justice and cohesion were all viewed to rest on the shoulder of education.

Informally, Brexit refers to the United Kingdom decision to leave the European Union. Van Rensen, (2016) stated that in the referendum held on June 23, 2016, the United Kingdom voted by a small margin to leave the European Union by 51.9% to 48.1%. The results of the referendum raised different questions. For example, questions such as what will be the long run economic effects of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, medium to long term effects and how such decision undermined Prime Minister Tony Blair's ten years term education policies?

Brexit was a complex matter because of its influence on socio-economic factors; political sensitivity, capability to divide families and members of the political parties and the political related resignation of two Prime ministers in the United Kingdom (Van Rensen, 2016). Brexit shaped the political history of the United Kingdom and it had economic effects (Van Rensen, 2016), claimed that trade costs will be larger if there is "harder Brexit" when the UK leave the single market and trade under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules, rather than "soft" Brexit option of staying in the single market. Working with these complex economic related concepts needs citizens who are in command of critical thinking skills and critical thinking dispositions.

II. BACKGROUND

The United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union drew more attention and interests on the socio-political arena. Brexit's interests not only reflect its importance and meaning to politics but also to education as determinant of any country's future economic life and facilitator of inclusive economic growth. It was noted that Brexit became an interest topic because it had some effects on the socio-economic standing of the United Kingdom (see Van Rensen, (2016; Craft, 2016), and it was initiated by socio-economic related factors such as immigration.

The European Union formation was more on economic matters (reduction of trade costs among its members and the culture of inclusivity-respecting diversity) and political stability and these are products of education systems. For example, there is a custom union between European Union members, which removes all tariffs barriers within Europe, which allows and promote free trade in goods and services. The Brexit also raised more questions about the role of the British education system in helping citizens to be well informed on complex issues such as this matter of voting to leave the European Union. There is a common misconception that effective democratic participation in advanced societies requires citizens to be well informed on complex issues.

Prime Minister Tony Blair had an interest on Europe or European Union (Furlong, 2008), because of socio-economic reasons. When he took office, he was committed to forging a new European identity for Britain; through different means, because Britain's destiny was closely tied to Europe (Furlong, 2008), Blair has always seen Britain's integration in Europe as a precondition of it becoming a truly modern country (Gray, 2004 p 40). The New Labour party was founded in the neo-liberal belief that only one economic system could deliver prosperity (Gray, 2004, p 42). This influenced the Tony Blair's government's political policies and education policies. The politics of inclusion rose to prominence in education policy under the new labour and became useful vehicle for constructing the collective identity and shared values necessary for a globally competitive economy. Education was seen as a foundation for social justice and social cohesion within the United Kingdom and Europe (Brown and Lauder, 2006). Thus the Labour government placed education at the forefront of its electoral campaign. It was Tony's government aim to teaching a 21st century profession. Furlong, (2008) stated that throughout Tony's ten years in office, his aspiration to reform the teaching profession was a remarkably consistent one. Tony's government perceived education as the best economic policy matter. Education was translated or taken as an economic policy matter rather a social policy, because creation of highly skilled workforce, national prosperity, social justice and cohesion were all viewed to rest on the shoulder of education (Lauder, 2007). Machin and Stevens, (2004) noted the education has also social benefits such as increased social cohesion and effective democratic participation and this form part of the argument for government support for education. Furlong, (2008) also stated that nations sought to develop specific reforms in response to imperatives generated by the social, cultural, economic changes associated with international changes. For example, Blair's government changed the ground rules of what teacher professionalism meant in order to harness the professionalism to government's education reform and national agenda (Furlong, 2008, p 727). Blair's government saw the need to respond to competitive global economy and knowledge gap of the labour force, and other social challenges such as attitudes of intolerance and inability to value diversity (Scott, 1995). The government addressed the issue of intolerance by introducing new types of special schools and priority was given to the disadvantaged through antidiscrimination legislation and through designing programmes referred to as centre of excellence in cities (Walford, 2005).

The creation of a highly skilled workforce was part of the vision of a 21st century profession teacher with capabilities to use new technologies in their teachings (Furlong. 2008, pp 727-739), and this was perceived as Tony Blair's big achievement because of its focus on key competencies, esoteric knowledge and skills, such as critical thinking skills. Esoteric knowledge allows individual to make connections between objects and events that are not obviously related and to project beyond the presents to the future or alternative world (Magno, 2010)

Critical thinking skills are considered as a valuable outcome of education systems (Magno, 2010), and considered a crucial aspect of the competence which citizens' need to possess to effectively participate in key national decisions such as Brexit. Critical thinking skills were one of the key aspects of the Blair's government central prescribed policy agenda necessary for enhancing competitiveness in globalising the economy (Whitty, 2009). This depends on the workforce or professionals who are in command of critical thinking skills and these are products of an effective education system. Tony Blair's government effort on improving the education system or teaching profession through making teaching a 21st century project was important for teaching critical thinking skills. This project puts more emphasis on supporting teaching pedagogical discourses, which include ensuring that critical thinking skills were embedded on critical thinking instructions and other pedagogical discourses, such as how the curriculum is taught. For example, Helpert, (1990) suggested that statistics could be taught as broadly applicable critical thinking skills as opposed to teaching it as a technique for data analysis. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Report, (2010) noted that the top priority for action in education is to teach people to think as critical thinking depends on cognitive activities which helps individual to acquire, retain, and transfer or apply knowledge on task. While metacognitive activities allow individuals to regulate or govern task execution to ensure satisfactory level of performance (Ku and Ho, 2010), being metacognitive allows people to challenge or be critical of what is presented as self-evident, consider different ways of judging information from environment, and be in a position to reason deductively, weigh evidence and distinguish relevant and irrelevant arguments (Ku and Ho, 2010; Magno, 2010).

Critical thinking skills and critical thinking dispositions within the project of making teaching a 21st century profession were aligned with critical thinking disposition. Halpern, (1990) noted that it is not enough to teach students critical thinking skills without knowing how to use them. Critical thinking skills is more than the successful use of the relevant or right skill in an appropriate context, it also embraces the individual's attitudes to recognise when the skill is needed and willingness to use the mental effort needed to apply it (Halpern, 1990), lazy and sloppy thinkers may poses critical thinking skills but not inclined to use them.

The over ten year's term of Blair's term in office was characterised by successful stories in the education sector (Furlong, 2008). Tony Blair was successful in his ambitious attempts at educational reforms (Furlong, 2008). At the end of his term of his office, there were more teachers, more diverse in terms of their backgrounds than before; they were better paid, better supported by teaching assistants and highly regarded, perhaps because of their effectiveness (Furlong, 2008, p 736; Mckinsey Report, 2005). Zancanella and Moore, (2014) noted that the United Kingdom, particularly England, has served as an example for public policy reforms, especially under Tony Blair's government in 1997-2007. These reforms were led by Michael Barber who was the Head of the Prime Minister's Delivery unit (Zancanella and Moore, 2014).

Under Tony Blair's government, education had been given the first priority because of its potential of helping people to develop critical thinking skills necessary for a globally competitive economy. For example, Blair's government facilitated the shift from elite to mass higher education system to respond to a competitive global economy and the creation of Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CELTLs) which were approved in different universities with a funding of 315 million pounds, the largest single funding initiative in teaching and learning (Lunt, 2008). This was part of the professionalization of higher education teaching.

Deciding who shall be given the accolade of a teacher was not taken lightly by the Blair's government because of the complex nature of teaching and learning, and the role of education in shaping the country's economic development. Someone who teaches was considered as critical for the learning processes, education system and the country global position or standing. Blair's government believed that the education system needs to be delivered by teams of professional teachers who can match the socio-economic demands of the country, in their explicit and implicit behaviours and attitudes.

The two terms of labour government eight separate education acts, and hundreds of separate education related initiatives have been crafted (Furlong, 2005; Walford, 2005). These include the Education (school) Act 1997; White paper excellence in schools DFEE, 1997; School Standards and Framework Act, 1998; Education (Students Loans) Act, 1998; Green paper, the learning Age ; Renaissance for a New Britain (DFEE), 1998; paper learning to succeed : a new Framework for post 16 learning (DFEE, 1999; Learning Skills Act, 2000; the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, 2001; Disability Discrimination Act, 1995; Green Paper, 2001; Schools building on success: Raising Standards, Promoting Diversity, Achieving Results, Education Act, 2002; Further Higher Education White Paper, 2003 and Higher Education Act, 2004 (Furlong, 2005; Walford, 2005). These acts gave direction and understanding of these levels (Early years, Secondary and Higher Education) of the British education system. An understanding of each was important because each section needs to be harnessed towards the broader reform agenda for socio-economic development (Furlong, 2008).

To achieve the broader reform the labour government embarked on different educational programmes such as restructuring the Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Graduate Teacher Programme, such as Teach First was designed to increase and improve the supply and quality of new entrants into the teaching profession for quality teaching and learning. The CPD was fundamental reformed by removing key responsibilities to from Higher education and based them in schools but operate within the national frameworks to achieve the new teacher professionalism relevant to the 21st century skills and demands (Furlong, 2008). A large body of knowledge revealed that school effects make a significant contribution to the variance of students' attainment (Sammons, 1999).

Relevant educational agencies such as Teacher Training Agencies (TTA) and Office For Standards in Education (OFSTED) were urged by the Blair's government to maintain the pressure on initial training institutions to develop vigorous quality assurance systems with penalties for underperforming training institutions (Furlong, 2005; Lunt, 2008), to ensure quality teaching and learning. Teachers were expected to model critical thinking and to teach students how to be critical thinkers. Quality teaching and learning pertain teaching students how to think critically, and this is an important matter in educational setting (Facione, 2007). It is important in helping people to participate effectively in society, as it is way of thinking, where set of skills are applied to encourage an informed and logical approach to deciding what to believe and do (Facione, 2007).

For quality assurance purposes, Teacher Training Agencies (TTA) were urged to focus on using effective instructional strategies to enhance teaching critical thinking skills. This was key in making Teacher Training Agencies and teachers more accountable and to increase government control over the profession, particularly control over what teachers teach or do in the classroom (Zancanella and Moore, 2014).

Critical thinking skills depend on effective instructional strategies, which help to improve students' critical thinking skills and critical thinking disposition (Halpern, 1999). The instructional strategies have a

potential of enhancing the individual critical thinking disposition, an attitude, willingness to recognise when the skill is needed and the willingness to exert the mental effort needed to apply the skill (Halpern, 1999). Young, (2008) study concluded that an inspired teacher and some energetic teaching assistants using small group discussions had successfully developed students' critical thinking skills.

Different teaching strategies, which include, project based learning; case based discussion, debate, open discussion, use of authentic problems situation from real context and project based learning were encouraged to ensure the effective teaching of critical skills and other competencies (Lunt, 2008). The use of authentic problem situations, which challenges students to grapple with complex issues, consider multiple perspectives, questions authoritative sources and allow someone to develop his or her own interpretation help students to think outside the box, be able to identify hidden assumptions, relationships and solutions. The use of authentic problem situations in teaching had the potential of helping students to develop critical thinking skills and capability to estimate the Brexit's effects on trade and living standards.

This section highlighted Blair's government efforts in professionalizing the British education system in order to respond to socio-economic related challenges such as the Brexit. The following section focuses on the methodology.

III. METHODOLOGY

The process of examining how Brexit undermined Blair's 1997-2007 education policies demand more qualitative data mainly from education related policies which fall within this period 1997-2007, and scholarly work on Blair's education policies legacy. Government policies such as education policies are forms of recoded communications, and intentions, which needs to be implemented and observed by national governments. The education policies crafted mainly in 1997-2007 were used or targeted because they characterised Prime Minister Tony Blair's ten year term in office. The policies were sampled through stratified sampling procedure from all the levels of the British education system: Primary, Secondary, 14-19 and Higher Education.

IV. QUESTIONS BASED MODEL

The study was underpinned by the Questions Based Model which facilitated the unpacking of the related concepts. It is based on these questions:

how Brexit reflects the British education system and its policies;

how the policies may have contributed to Brexit.

These questions help in unpacking the key concepts and policies' influence in promoting quality teaching and learning characterised by enhancement of critical thinking and critical thinking dispositions which are embraced in Britain education policies. The British citizens' as products of the U.K. Education system and policies were expected to depict their critical thinking skills and critical thinking disposition skills when deliberating on Brexit during the June, 2016 referendum. They were also expected to analyse the visible and invisible messages of the world surrounding Brexit (Van Rensen, 2016).

Peoples' capabilities to think about the benefits of any scenario depend on the education they had received. Education system and its policies are expected to promote quality teaching and learning, provision of opportunities for all students and help them to be independent critical thinkers, with capabilities to question the very basis of their own beliefs, values, assumptions and change peoples' way they view themselves and the world around them (Brookfield, 1987).

V. ANALYSIS

Content analysis was used to collect data, analyse and describe the policies on key aspects which relate to Brexit referendum of June 2016. The policies were analysed using the interpretive content analyses, which is also serve as an observational research method used to systematically examine and evaluate the symbolic content of all forms of written or recorded communications such as policies (Burnett, 1999).

The interpretive content analysis was used because it allows an unobtrusive appraisal of the policies in relation to Brexit. This unobtrusiveness was valuable in this study because direct methods of inquiry were impossible in this study. In addition, this analysis provided an empirical starting point for generating research evidence about the nature and effects of specific education policies. It also provides data which is descriptive, classificatory and with identification powers (see Table 1). This helps to ascertain how Brexit undermined the education policies crafted by Blair's government 1997-2007.

Table 1. Policy Classification, Policy Description, Policy and researched evidence and Themes.

Policy	Policy Description	Policy related	Themes
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Classification:1997-2007, Labour Education policies		Researched evidence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour Party Manifesto, 1997; • Labour government policies focus; 	<p>-Education will be our number one priority, increase the share of national income spent on education (Labour Party Manifesto, 1997);</p> <p>-cut class size 30 for all 5,6,7yeras old;attack low standardsin schools;</p> <p>-The two terms of Labour government eight separate education acts were crafted;</p> <p>-hundreds of separate initiatives (Walford, 2005, p 4);</p> <p>-Introduction of National literacy and Numeracy strategies to ensure all primary schools meet agreed targets;</p> <p>-Priorities given to disadvantage through antidiscrimination legislation;</p> <p>-Expansion of higher education to raise standards in secondary schools;</p> <p>-Increase investment in higher education and expansion to 50% of the proportion of people under 30 with higher education experience (Further Higher , 2003);</p>	<p>-Increase in public expenditure on education, 5bn funding for ICT infrastructure for schools, increase support for teachers in terms of pay, training and provision of teaching assistant (Furlong, 2008, p 736; Labour Party Manifesto, 1997);</p> <p>-various key acts and policies were crafted (Furlong, 2008 p 736;</p> <p>-National literacy and numeracy as mechanisms for targets;</p> <p>-Antidiscrimination legislation to uplift disadvantaged groups;</p> <p>-Education policies put emphasis on raising standards and participation but still there were lack of improvement for most disadvantaged pupils (Whitty, 2009, p 268).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritization and increase share of national income spent on education; • Education acts as roadmaps; • National literacy and Numeracy mechanisms; • National Anti-discrimination policies in schools; • Participationbut lack of improvement for most disadvantage groups;
	<p>-Policy of marketization of education</p>	<p>-The blame for rise in exclusion has been on marketization of education and reinforcement of existing inequalities (Pomeroy, 2000; Parson,1999;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketization of education and reinforcement of inequalities
	<p>-Education and Training for 14-19 policy</p>	<p>Training 14-19 year through integrating services establishment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic Approach to education

		of partnerships was laudable (Pring, p 689).	
	-Making Teaching a 21 st Century Profession policy	- at the end of Blair's office , there were more teachers, more diverse in backgrounds, than before, better paid, supported by teaching assistants, more managed than in past, (Furlong, 2008 p.736-737);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and 21st Century Competencies
	-Investing in Technology and Education	-New Labour can claim rightly to have made an unprecedented and sustained political commitment to technology in education since 1998 (Selwyn, 2007, p204); though ICT agenda was located firmly on enhancing competitiveness in globally economy at expense of pedagogical concerns (Selwyn, 2007, p204);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained political commitment to education technology
White Paper 2005 on creation of major and extensive initiative Centres for Excellence in Teaching and learning (CELTLs)	CLTLs were supported with a funding of 315million over five years, representing HEFCE's largest ever single funding initiative in teaching and learning (Lunt, 2008, p 749).	-Professionalism of HE teaching has been promoted by creation of Higher Education Academy (HEA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of teaching and Learning through excellence

VI. DISCUSSIONS

The discussions are guided by the aim of the study which was to critical examine how the Brexit undermined the New Labour government or Blair's 1997-2007 education policies mostly regarded favourably by overseas governments and international agencies on improving school systems internationally (teaching and learning to enhance students critical thinking skills and critical thinking disposition) (Whitty, 2009, p 278; Furlong, 2008; OECD Report on teachers matter, 2005). Examining the policies involves looking at the policies contributions to effective teaching and learning and how they negatively affected the processes. The discussions are based on the content analysis of research based evidence and education policies on key aspects which relate to Brexit referendum of June 2016.

VII. INITIAL TRAINING INSTITUTIONS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Throughout Prime Minister Tony Blair's ten years in office Teachers Training Agencies (TTA) and OFSTED, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills responsible for inspecting services providing education and skills for learners of all ages and also inspecting and regulating services that care for children and young people and maintained their pressure on providers of initial training to develop rigorous quality assurance systems to ensure quality teaching.

Training providers were urged to turn a critical eye towards their own influence on pedagogy and critical development skills among students. Critical thinking skills were cited as the outcomes of quality education and the best route towards the achievement of economic progress and social justice within the United Kingdom and beyond. Higher order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving were considered by Blair's government as necessary skills for the 21st century British students and

citizens to participate in effectively in a democratic society with a set of skills that encourage an informed and logical approach to decision making. This was demonstrated through Blair's government effort in making teaching a 21st century profession which was eventually recognised at international level. As reported that at the end of his term of his office, there were more teachers, more diverse in terms of their backgrounds than before; they were better paid, better supported by teaching assistants and highly regarded, perhaps because of their effectiveness (Furlong, 2008, p 736; McKinsey Report, 2005). This suggests that students were experiencing effective teaching and learning, and exposed to different competencies such knowledge, values and critical thinking skills to be used effectively in different situations such as the Brexit referendum of June 2016.

The Brexit referendum of June 2016 required the British citizens to apply their critical thinking skills and critical thinking disposition skills because of its complexity. It required them to think about different issues surrounding Brexit such as the meaning of the referendum, its consequences to the British economy, future existence of the European Union, future stability of the Europe and status of Britain as a modern country. As (Gray, 2004, P 40) once claimed that Prime Minister Tony Blair has always seen Britain's integration to Europe as precondition of becoming a truly modern country. A truly modern country depends on sound economy, a product of effective trading mechanisms among countries.

VIII. MAKING TEACHING A 21ST CENTURY PROFESSION PROJECT

Besides Tony Blair's effort in making teaching a 21st century profession by putting more emphasis on key competencies (values, skills and knowledge), the citizens overlooked the future implications of the June 2016 referendum in deferent aspects such as on the country's future economy. As Van Reenen, (2016 p 368) claimed that the bottom line is straight forward: under all plausible scenarios, Brexit will make Britain poorer compared with remaining in the European Union. The United Kingdom (U.K.) will have higher trade costs with its neighbours in Europe (which account for about half of all United Kingdom U.K. trade), and this will reduce its trade and therefore welfare. Van Reenen, (2016) further noted that the majority of U.K. voters seem to have acted against their economic self-interest, and end with some speculations about why the campaign to leave prevailed, p, 368).

The nature or the complexities of Brexit was also overlooked during the campaign, yet it forms part of the core issues and with some economic implications. As Van Reenen, (2016 p 368) noted that Brexit net cost will depend crucially on Britain's final trading arrangement with Europe. A "soft Brexit" whereby the United Kingdom continues to have close integration with European Single market (as does Norway), would have the lowest cost. A "hard Brexit", whereby Britain's access to European Union markets is much lower than now (on par with that of the United States or Japan, for example), would have much more damaging effect.

Tony Blair's effort in making teaching a 21st century profession was challenged or watered down by Brexit because the U.K. voters appeared not aware of the benefits of U.K. membership in the European Union or not effectively learnt about the European Union as an organisation at school level. Van Reenen, (2016, p 368) stated the membership in the European Union has reduced trade costs between the U.K. and the rest of Europe. Most obviously, there is a customs union between EU members, which means that all tariff barriers have been removed within the EU, allowing for free trade in goods and services.

IX. POLICY OF INCLUSION AND IMMIGRATES

Van Reenen, (2016 pp. 376- 378) noted that a major factor in the Brexit referendum was the desire to reduce immigration. Between 1995 and 2015, the number of EU nationals living in the United Kingdom tripled, mainly after the accession of Poland and other formerly communist countries in 2004. Therefore, some U.K. voters voted to leave the European Union because of perceived noneconomic benefits such as fewer immigrants and greater sovereignty, a perfectly rational trade off to make in a democracy-one can always choose to reduce rule-based cooperation, cut markets trading and become poorer p 378. The fact that Brexit referendum was centred on immigrants an issue which is embraced in different policies and legislation dented Blair's Labour government effort of improving inclusion in and through education. The U.K. schools had legal duties under the Race Act (amendment) Act, 2000 to promote equality of opportunity, and relations between different racial, cultural and religious groups and communities (including immigrants). Schools were mandated to address racism and xenophobia and, against refugees and asylum-seekers. School Governing Bodies were also mandated to ensure that schools comply with legislation and other related procedures and strategies are implemented. Schools and Governing Bodies were urged to work with other relevant departments such as the Department For International Development to support programmes which encourage global awareness in the U.K. schools, through links with schools in Africa, Asia, America and Caribbean to promote inclusion in societies.

More teachers from diverse background were also recruited by the New Labour government to enhance teaching and learning, and to promote social inclusion in schools and society. Ross, (2002) noted that education systems

need to be delivered by teams of professionals who match the range of the cultural and social varieties of the British society.

X. NEW LABOUR APPROACH TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Though the ten year's term of Blair's term in office was characterised by successful stories in the education sector (Furlong, 2008), such as more teachers, more diverse in terms of their backgrounds than before; better paid, better supported by teaching assistants and highly regarded, perhaps because of their effectiveness (Furlong, 2008, p 736; McKinsey Report, 2005), but there was relatively lack of improvement for the most disadvantaged pupils because of the presence of quasi-market forces in education which creates tension between inclusion and exclusion, this undermined the policies on widen participation and inclusion to effective teaching and learning in schools.

Promotion of parental choice in schools sustained the middle class hegemony (Reay pp 639-650), which increased inequality, segmented and augmented middle class advantage in educational opportunities and disadvantaged the poor, to access critical competencies such as critical thinking skills and critical thinking disposition skills (Whitty, 2009). As noted earlier, these skills were a key factor on the Brexit referendum of 2016, because the U.K. citizens were expected think about trade costs implications if there is "harder Brexit" and "soft" Brexit option of staying in the single market.

XI. SUSTAINED POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

The New Labour government initiated Centres for Excellence in Teaching and learning (CELTLs) and were supported with a funding of 315 million pounds over five years, representing HEFCE's largest ever single funding initiative in teaching and learning (Lunt, 2008, p 749). This led to some school improvements under New Labour. Whitty, (2009 p 274) noted that in fairness to New Labour, the importance of addressing the continuing failure of disadvantaged pupils was actually recognised by Estelle Morris as early as 2001, and the sustained reduction in the number of schools identified as weak or failing and this remains New Labour's legacy (Whitty, 2009). However, sometimes this was hindered by New Labour's actions such as the government fixation on standards and target setting (Whitty, 2009, p 274), and quasi-market in education which has actually reinforced some existing inequalities in the education system. Children from lower income and social class background were concentrated in less well performing schools (Machine and Stevens, 2004, p 164). These New Labour's actions become a barrier to students' learning and exposure to critical thinking skills necessary for dealing with complex issues such as Brexit.

The New Labour's commitment to education has been observed by Selwyn, (2008 p 304), where noted that New Labour government can claim rightly to have made an unprecedented and sustained political commitment to technology in education since 1998, however the down side was that the New Labour ICT agenda was more concern about enhancing competitiveness in a globalised economy (p708), at the expense of pedagogical concerns or discourses. Sendag and Odabasi, (2009) noted that learning online problem based learning had a significant effect on increasing the critical thinking skills. Koh, and Hew, (2010 p. 284) study finding also indicated that online discussion forums, socratic questioning, project based learning were characterised by more advanced levels of knowledge construction. Where ideas were rationalised and integrated to plausible solutions enhance thinking skills.

XII. CONCLUSION

Overall, there is visible and invisible evidence that the Brexit referendum of 2016 and the policy approaches used by the New Labour government undermined Blair's ten years in office. Directly and indirectly the New Labour education policies of 1997-2007 were undermined by the UK citizen's reactions and behaviours towards the Brexit campaign and the results of June 2016 referendum. Their behaviours were in contrary to the expected behaviour from products of the British education system, which was internationally recognised and regarded and supported, (Whitty, 2009 p. 275) re-emphasised that the New Labour approach to education has been taken up or regarded favourably by overseas governments and international agencies because of its impact on teaching and learning. Most Authors on their effort of evaluating Blair's education legacy did acknowledge the huge increases in public expenditure in education, which included the 5bn pounds in the area of ICT infrastructure for schools, increase support for teachers in terms of pay, training and provision of teaching assistants (Furlong, 2008 p.)p736-737).

The policies were undermined by Brexit referendum because the some peoples' behaviours depicted that they lack basic knowledge about the European Union key economic functions within the UK and European continent. Van Reenen, (2016 p. 378) claimed that a survey evidence suggested that most people thought they would not be economically worse off because of Brexit (Collinson, 2016), this could be interpreted as the lack of critically thinking dispositions on key national matters and an "injury" to the New Labour's effort of improving teaching and learning in schools and higher education. Lunt, (2008 p. 749) noted that throughout the

Blair government has been the attempt to enhance the quality of teaching through the creation of Centres For Excellence (CELTLs) which were supported with funding of 315million pounds over five years. There was the professionalization of Higher Education (HE) teaching, promoted by the creation of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), and the introduction of teaching qualifications for teachers in Higher Education.

In conclusion, Prime Minister Tony Blair's Government Education Policies of 1997- 2007 were undermined by both Brexit referendum of June 2016 and the New Labour's own actions which sometimes hindered rather than helped the implementation of their good policies. As (Whitty, 1989) claimed when policies are applied in practice intentions and outcomes are rarely the same, policy implementation results in unintended consequences, which often difficult to predict. The approach adopted by the New Labour on the implementation of the education policies also undermined the policies and the effort of the New Labour government's effort improving teaching and learning, and perhaps avoid Brexit related practices. The New Labour's promotion of parental choice and its role in sustaining middle class hegemony increased inequality instead of reducing it, thus sedimented middle class advantage to education opportunities(Whitty, 2009 p. 268; Lunt, 2008 p 742), the expansion of students numbers and the target of participation by one third of the age cohort had been achieved but had not succeeded in reducing class inequalities. The issue of inequality in education opportunities denied some students the access to knowledge and other key competencies such as critical thinking skills. The students' inaccessibility to key competencies undermined the Labour's effort to integrate Britain to Europe and indirectly lead to Brexit because Brexit is a product of lack of knowledge on key matters related to the European Union or the history of the Union (Van Reenen, 2016 p 379), indicated that despite the evidence to the contrary, there remains a prevalent belief-stoked populist politicians that European Union or the large immigrates flow has had huge negative effects on British workers.

It could be concluded that Blair policies' link with the Conservative party practices such as the issue of modern welfare system, based on market choice undermined his government's policies particularly on social justice and economic prosperity and influenced the Brexit. Welfare system based on market choice (Whitty, 2002; Lawton, 2005; Jenkins, 2007; Tomlison, 2001; Ball, 2001; Power and Whitty, 199) suggests clear link continuity with the right-of-centre and neo-liberal policies pursued by the Conservatives (Lunt, 2008). This is depicted on the voting patterns among and between the British citizens on Brexit referendum and their attitudes towards the issue of immigration and emigrates from the European Union zone and others from some developing nations. The Blair's policies were calling for partnerships among the British citizens and across and between nations to enhance and achieve economic growth, sustainable development and social cohesion and inclusion.

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